

# HEALTH ISSUES

IN THE WORKPLACE

FALL 2010



HEALTHY  
MINDS MATTER

# Mental Health: It's a State of Well being.

Mental health is a topic that's often not openly talked about, but it needs to come "out of the shadows." Mental health and well-being are very important to your overall health. A person's health is made up of their physical and mental health. It's common for people to confuse the terms mental health and mental illness. Because of this, it's important to understand the more precise meaning of each of these terms, and how these states can impact your health.

Mental health is a state of well-being. It's not simply the absence of mental illness, as is commonly thought, but rather a state of flourishing (Keyes, 2007). A person who is mentally healthy can cope with the normal stresses of life. This doesn't mean that they don't experience a full range of emotions; rather, it has to do with how well they are able to respond to those emotions. Mental illness can feature different sets of symptoms that affect how we think, feel, and behave. A person who has a mental illness is unable to flourish, and often can't meet life's day-to-day demands.

As people face various challenges and changes during their lives, they may experience some changes in their mental health condition, which can be short-lived or more long-term and serious. It's estimated that one in five Canadians, close to six million people, will develop a mental illness at some point in their lives. Mental illness is estimated to cost the Canadian economy \$51 billion dollars a year; and each day 500 000 people miss work due to mental health problems (Lim, Jacobs, Ohinmaa, Schopflocher, & Dewa, 2008).



Lack of knowledge about positive mental health and the stigma held toward mental illness are two of the major barriers to having a population of mentally healthy people. Many people are not well-informed about the importance of mental health to their overall health, nor how to find help for mental illness. Due to the stigma associated with mental illness, people often resist getting professional help.

The scope and impact of mental health issues (both positive and negative) are beginning to be recognized. There is a growing awareness that poor mental health is a risk factor for chronic diseases (PCPC-NTTMHP, 2009). If we promote mental health and work to prevent mental illness, we'll not only help lower rates of mental illness, but also lower rates of chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes.

People need to be informed about the benefits of positive mental health and well-being, and educated about the stigma of mental illness and where to get help. Positive mental health and well-being are associated with better physical health, better relationships, and fewer missed days at work. The absence of mental illness allows people and communities to live happier and more productive lives (Keyes, 2007). This *Healthy Minds Matter* Newsletter may help answer some questions you may have about mental health and mental illness and how they impact your overall health. We should all do our part, as friends, family members, and co-workers, to support each other and promote mental health.

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- Keyes, C. L. M. (2007). Towards a mentally flourishing society: Mental health promotion, not cure. *Journal of Public Mental Health, 6*(2), 4-7.
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- The Pan-Canadian Planning Committee for the National Think Tank on Mental Health Promotion [PCPC-NTTMHP]. (2009). Proceedings from *Towards Flourishing for All: National Mental Health Promotion and Mental Illness Prevention Policy for Canadians*. Calgary, AB.

# DEALING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

At some point in everyone's life, we're faced with tough situations, for example, the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the loss of a job. These events can cause feelings of sadness, fear, frustration, disappointment, or anger. It's normal to have these feelings when things don't go our way. It's when we can't cope with these feelings that help may be needed.



When dealing with emotions, it can be hard to figure out just when help is needed. Fortunately, many people who have trouble coping with their feelings experience the same thought patterns and find themselves in similar situations, such as those outlined in the checklist below.

**Use the following checklist to figure out if you or someone close to you may require help dealing with negative feelings. Check all the boxes that apply to you or the person you're doing the checklist for.**

- Trouble experiencing emotions other than anger, sadness, guilt, worthlessness, or hopelessness.
- Rapid or dramatic shifts in feelings or mood swings.
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or functioning at the same level as before the tough situation (e.g., failing in school, missing an important deadline at work).
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, or sex drive.
- Lack of personal hygiene and cleanliness.
- Lack of energy.
- Loss of interest in going out with friends or family members.
- Loss of interest in favourite events or activities.
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts (i.e., thoughts of killing yourself or others).

## If you or someone close to you is:

- **Experiencing three or more of these issues, help may be needed.**
- **Having suicidal or homicidal thoughts, urgent help is required.**

The person experiencing the difficulty can talk to their health care provider (HCP) about the kind of support that would work best for their issue. Some of the things an HCP may suggest are meeting with a psychiatrist (i.e., a doctor who specializes in mental health), meeting with a psychologist (i.e., a trained counsellor), or joining a self-help group (i.e., a group that provides support for people going through similar situations). The person can also talk to their union or human resource representative about the different types of help available through the workplace. Another way to find help is to visit [www.camh.net/care\\_treatment/index.html](http://www.camh.net/care_treatment/index.html). This website, hosted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, has information about the different mental health services available across Canada and how to access them.

**It's important to know when to get help and to get help right away if it's needed. Over time, if our feelings aren't dealt with, serious mental health issues can develop.**

## DID YOU KNOW...

In addition to our mental health, our negative emotions can harm our physical health over time. For example, research has shown that adults who have higher levels of anger have a 31% greater chance of developing coronary heart disease (Davidson & Mostofsky, 2010).

### Key References:

- American Psychiatric Association. (2009). *Warning signs of major mental illnesses*. Retrieved July 14, 2010, from <http://healthyminds.org/Document-Library/Brochure-Library/Lets-Talk-Facts-Warning-Signs-of-Major-Mental-Illnesses.aspx>
- Canadian Mental Health Association. (n.d.). *Depression*. Retrieved July 14, 2010, from [http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=3-86-87&lang=1](http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=3-86-87&lang=1)
- Canadian Mental Health Association. (n.d.). *Getting help: When & how*. Retrieved July 14, 2010, from [http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=4-37](http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=4-37)
- Davidson, K.W., & Mostofsky, E. (2010). Anger expression and risk of coronary heart disease: Evidence from the Nova Scotia Health Survey. *American Heart Journal*, 159(2), 199-206.



## Achieving Positive Mental Health

Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. Positive mental health includes the ability to enjoy life, deal with challenges, contribute to the community, and have a sense of purpose in life (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2009). You play an active role in achieving your own positive mental health.

There are lots of things you can do to improve your mental health. Try some of the following suggestions:

- Make a list of things you're good at. Pick one you haven't done in awhile and do it.
- Volunteer your time. Find a cause you feel strongly about and get involved. You might be surprised by how good you'll feel when you give back to other people.
- Reconnect with a friend or family member you haven't seen in awhile.
- Make a list of things you want to try. Challenge yourself to try new things.
- Find a group or team that interests you and get involved. You'll get to participate in an activity you like, and create a new social group at the same time.

### Social Ties Matter

Spending time with friends can be more than just a fun way to spend a day. It can also improve your mental health. One study found that people who reported low levels of social and emotional support had more days of poor health, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety (Strine et al., 2008). Feeling connected to people is a great way to boost your positive mental health, so make an effort to get together with people you enjoy whenever possible.

## Did you know?

A positive outlook affects our mental health. Research findings show that positive psychological activities (e.g., talking about positive experiences, writing thank-you letters, thinking positive thoughts) improved the well-being of participants. Further, these activities also helped treat depressive symptoms (e.g., loss of interest in daily activities, trouble sleeping, feelings of helplessness) (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

#### Key References:

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). (2009). *Improving the health of Canadians: Exploring positive mental health*. Ottawa: CIHI.  
Sin, N. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: A practice-friendly meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65(5), 467-487.  
Strine, T. W., Chapman, D. P., Ballus, L., & Mokdad, A. H. (2008). Health-related quality of life and health behaviors by social and emotional support. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 43, 151-159.

# TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Bringing up the subject of mental health makes many people uncomfortable. However, if you think someone close to you is suffering with a mental health issue, talking to them about it might help them get the support they need.

If you think someone you know has a mental health issue, the following tips may help you feel more relaxed about talking to them:

- **Be comfortable.** Plan a face-to-face talk in a private setting to avoid embarrassing them. Choose a place where you are both comfortable and can stay for as long as needed.
- **Ask how they are.** Asking how they're doing, and letting them know you've noticed changes in their behaviour or personality, leaves the topic open for them to discuss. If they aren't open to talking about it, let them know you're there to listen when and if they need you.
- **Know the facts.** Learn about mental health issues before bringing them up. Research local support groups and resources that you can recommend.
- **Be sensitive.** Choose your words carefully and avoid using a negative tone of voice.

The most important thing you can do is to let them know that you're there for support. The simple act of showing that you care and being there to listen is a great way to help.

#### Key Reference:

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2007). *Stigma: Understanding the impact of prejudice and discrimination on people with mental health and substance use problems*. Retrieved July 15, 2010, from [http://www.camh.net/Care\\_Treatment/Resources\\_clients\\_families\\_friends/stigma\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.camh.net/Care_Treatment/Resources_clients_families_friends/stigma_brochure.pdf)

# HEALTHY MINDS MATTER FOR KIDS TOO!

Mental illness and stress are often thought of as adult problems, but they can also affect children. In fact, one out of every five children in Canada has a mental health problem (Barankin & Khanlou, 2007). Thankfully, there are ways you can help your child deal with life's ups and downs in a healthy way.

## What is Resiliency?

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from setbacks and stay strong during hard times. Building resiliency early in life is important, as it's partly a learned behaviour. Resilient children are more likely to do well in school, are less prone to depression, and go on to have happier, more successful lives as adults.

## Signs of Stress in Kids

While some stress is normal, too much stress can be harmful and may lead to bigger problems later on. Most caregivers can easily spot problem behaviours in their children. Crying, whining, poor listening, fighting, falling grades at school, and eating more or less than normal are all behaviours that may result from stress. However, their bodies, minds, and feelings can also signal that something is wrong, as explained below.

## BODY

Some physical signs of stress include: tense muscles, headaches, stomach aches, bed-wetting, being cold, skin rash, shakiness, poor sleep, constant tiredness, and generally feeling sick.

## MIND

Some mental effects of stress include: short attention span, forgetfulness, trouble problem-solving, being easily distracted, confusion, and being unreasonable.

## FEELINGS

Some emotions that may be brought on by stress include: fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, panic, anger, helplessness, hopelessness, and feeling threatened.

### Key References:

- Barankin, T. & Khanlou, N. (2007) *Growing up resilient: Ways to build resilience in children and youth*. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. ISBN 978-0-88868-504-9, pg. 11.
- The Psychology Foundation of Canada. (2007). *The struggle to juggle: Stress management strategies for you and your family*. Retrieved July 5, 2010, from [http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/publications/the\\_struggle\\_to\\_juggle.pdf](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/publications/the_struggle_to_juggle.pdf)
- The Psychology Foundation of Canada. (n.d.). *Kids have stress too! How to help kids handle stress*. Retrieved July 5, 2010, from [http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/KHST\\_yellow2008.pdf](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/KHST_yellow2008.pdf)



## Sources of Stress for Kids

- Schedules that are too busy and don't allow for enough free play and rest time.
- Big changes such as starting school, moving to a new home, separation or divorce, or the death of a loved one.
- Social issues like being teased, bullied, or not "fitting in" with peers.
- Fighting or arguing among family members.

## Building Resiliency in Your Child: What You Can Do

- Even young children can learn to manage their own stress, with their caregivers' help. Here are some ways you can help build resiliency in your child:
- Spend time with your child, both with fun activities and chores. Give them choices.
  - Show interest in your child's life by asking questions about school, friends, and life in general – and really listen!
  - Model appropriate behaviour in your own relationships and avoid involving your child in adult issues.
  - Make sure your child gets enough rest, good nutrition, and physical activity.
  - Help build your child's confidence by pointing out the things they're good at.
  - Let your child know that you love them in as many ways as you can.

While we can't protect our children from all of life's ups and downs, we can raise them to be resilient. That way, when hardships come, they can work through them in a healthy way.



# STRESS

**Stress is a natural part of our lives.**

**Stress is our bodies' response to the changing environment and the events we experience in our lives. If you feel stressed out, you're not alone. In fact, 28% of Canadian**

**adults between the ages of 34 and 54 reported being stressed daily (Statistics Canada, 2008). The good news is stress can be managed. It's important to understand your stressors so you can be better prepared to deal with them.**

## **STRESSORS**

Many life events can cause feelings of stress. These events are known as stressors. Stressors can be major or minor. Events such as job loss, getting married, moving to a new school, and losing a loved one are major stressors. On the other hand, being stuck in traffic, having an argument with a family member, meeting work deadlines, and running late to an appointment are minor stressors.

## **GOOD STRESS (EUSTRESS) AND BAD STRESS (DISTRESS)**

Some stress is actually good for us. Eustress is the positive stress that keeps us on our toes and motivates us to achieve a certain goal. This type of stress can be managed because we feel in control of the situation. For example, a little bit of stress from your boss may drive you to work harder to meet a deadline. Likewise, feeling a small amount of stress over an upcoming exam may motivate you to study harder and achieve a higher grade.

On the other hand, some stressors can be negative. Distress is caused by stressors that bring about negative feelings such as anger, frustration, and sadness. For example, getting a speeding ticket may cause distress because you may feel upset and angry.

Stress can be acute (i.e., short-term) or chronic (i.e., long-term). Acute stress is our bodies' response to an unexpected, immediate event (e.g., a near miss at a traffic light). This type of stress is short in duration and passes fairly quickly. Chronic stress is long-lasting because we have to deal with the same stressor on an ongoing basis (e.g., caring for a high needs parent or child). Chronic stress is worse for your overall health than acute stress. It increases your risk of developing chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease (The Psychology Foundation of Canada, 2009).

It's important to know what type of stress we're experiencing so we can develop a plan to manage it.

# STRESSED OUT?

About 30% of working Canadians consider finances to be their biggest source of stress (The Psychology Foundation of Canada, 2009).

## MANAGING STRESS

There are three different methods that most of us use to deal with stress. Depending on the issue, we may use one, two, or all three methods to manage a particular stressor. The three different coping methods are listed below.

**Task-oriented:** the individual focuses on the situation, and deals with it in a positive way. For example, they may work with a banker or financial consultant to deal with overdue bills and money problems.

**Emotion-oriented:** the individual focuses on their feelings and tries to find social support to deal with the situation they're facing. For example, they may ask their friends and family for support if they are having trouble dealing with a failing relationship.

**Distraction-oriented:** the individual tries to avoid the situation by taking their mind off the problem. In other words, out of sight, out of mind. For example, the individual might go shopping to avoid a stressful situation at home.

It's important to keep in mind that the method or methods we use to deal with stress depend on the situation we are faced with. Also, different methods of managing stress are effective for different people.

## TIPS TO REDUCE STRESS

Below are just a few tips that can help you reduce your stress level:

- Be physically active.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Set realistic goals.
- Don't overcommit your time or money.
- Do something you love (e.g., a hobby).
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Make time for yourself.
- Ask for help.

## WHEN STRESS IS TAKING OVER

If you're feeling stressed and can't manage it yourself, there are many resources that can help. Talk to your health care provider about the services available in your community. You can also contact your human resources contact or union representative for help in accessing the employee supports available at your workplace.



### Key References:

- Ben-Zur, H. (2009). Coping styles and affect. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 16(2), 87-101.
- Canadian Mental Health Association & Heart & Stroke Foundation. (2009). *Coping with stress*. Retrieved June 14, 2010, from <http://www.heartandstroke.com/atf/cf/%7B99452D8B-E7F1-4BD6-A57D-B136CE6C95BF%7D/coping-with-stress-en.pdf>
- The Psychology Foundation of Canada. (2009). *Managing to manage workplace stress*. Retrieved June 17, 2010, from [http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/publications/managing\\_to\\_manage.pdf](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/publications/managing_to_manage.pdf)
- McLaughlin, K. A. & Hatzebuehler, M. L. (2009). Stressful life events, anxiety, sensitivity, and internalizing symptoms in adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 118(3), 659-669.
- Statistics Canada. (2008). *Perceived life stress*. Retrieved June 21, 2010, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2010001/article/11108-eng.htm>

# CALENDAR

# 2010

# of EVENTS

## **Harvest at the Homestead**

**October 3**

Join us for ghost stories, crafts, and refreshments.

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

John R. Park Homestead

915 County Rd. 50 East, Amherstburg

519-776-5209

admin@erca.org

www.erca.org

## **Run for the Cure**

**October 3**

Be part of the largest single-day fundraising event dedicated to creating a future without breast cancer.

8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Riverfront Festival Plaza

Riverside Dr. East, Windsor

519-973-4465

Windsor@cbcfrun.org

www.cibcrunfortheure.com

## **House of Fright Haunted Graveyard**

**October 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, and 30**

Bring the family out to visit the haunted graveyard! Also includes face painting, play areas, and clowns.

6:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.

\$8

AMA Sportsmen's Club

468 Lowes Sideroad, Amherstburg

519-736-0678 or 519-250-2179

houseoffright@gmail.com

www.houseoffright.ca

## **14th Annual Horror Hayride**

**October 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 29, and 30**

Frightfully fun filled nights of family entertainment! Recommended for children 11 years old and up; parental discretion is strongly advised. Various times.

Call for pricing.

Colasanti's Tropical Gardens

1550 Road #3 East, Kingsville

519-326-3287

tropical@colasanti.com

www.colasanti.com

## **HOCKtoberfest**

**October 21–24**

A female hockey festival involving 72 teams from around the world.

Displays, clinics, and more.

Various times.

South Windsor, Forest Glade, and

WFCU Arenas, Windsor

Vollmer Culture Recreation

Complex, LaSalle

519-816-8235

info@hocktoberfest.com

www.hocktoberfest.com

## **Windsor Film Festival**

**November 4–7**

Marking the celebration of Canadian and world film, providing a richly diverse program of captivating and thought-provoking film that's accessible to all.

Various times.

\$10

Capitol Theatre

121 University Ave. West,

Windsor

519-965-6488

info@windsorfilmfestival.ca

www.windsorfilmfestival.ca

www.wiff10.com

## **41st Annual Migration Festival**

**October 15–17**

Historical atmosphere to celebrate the legacy of Jack Miner. There are many events the whole family will enjoy.

Various times

Various locations within the Town of Kingsville

519-733-2123

amurray@kingsville.ca

www.migrationfestival.ca

## **Masterworks**

**October 16**

The Windsor Symphony Orchestra performs Masterworks. John Morris Russell is the conductor.

8:00 p.m.

Tickets range in price

Chrysler Theatre, Windsor

519-973-1238

jpgalli@windsorsymphony.com

www.windsorsymphony.com

## **LaSalle Antiques and Nostalgia Fair**

**October 23 and 24**

This annual fair will feature a variety of antiques, collectibles, and vintage items for sale. Glassware and china, jewelry, toys, books, prints, and much more will be on display.

Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday: 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

\$2 daily fee

Vollmer Culture and Recreation

Complex, LaSalle

519-945-0331

jtbin@bell.net

www.lasalleantiquesandnostalgia.com

## **River Lights**

**November 19 (opening night)**

A display of wonderful lighted characters, official tree lighting, and activities galore! Fun for the whole family.

Various times

Navy Yard Park and Toddy Jones

Park, Amherstburg

519-736-4642

riverlights@mdirect.net

www.riverlights.ca





### **9th Annual Working Toward Wellness Healthy Workplace Awards**

*October 27*

The aim of the event is to honour workplaces that have successfully implemented a comprehensive health promotion program.

7:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

\$25

Ciociaro Club, Windsor  
519-776-5933 ext. 3171  
abaker@wehealthunit.org  
www.wehealthunit.org

### **18th Annual Fantasy of Lights** *November 20 (opening night)*

Fantasy of lights, hot chocolate, dinner with Santa, and fireworks.

5:00 p.m.

Lakeside Pavilion  
315 Queen St. South, Kingsville  
519-733-2123  
amurray@kingsville.ca  
www.fantasyoflights.ca

### **Windsor Santa Claus Parade** *December 4*

Enjoy the glittering festiveness of the Windsor Santa Claus Parade!

6:00 p.m.

Route runs west on Riverside Drive from Rankin Park to Brock St.  
Windsor  
519-254-2880  
mrssanta@mnsi.net  
www.santaparade.org

## **The following classes, services, and resources are held in the city and county.**

Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit 519-258-2146 ext. 1340 or 1-800-265-5822 ext. 1340 for location, time, and registration.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website, [www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org), has our fall schedule of classes.

### **Intake Nurse**

The Intake Nurse is available to provide information and telephone counselling on a wide variety of topics (e.g., parenting, infant care, pregnancy, community resources). Hours of operation are from Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.  
519-258-2146 ext. 1350

### **Off to a Great Start Program**

Many researchers have identified birth to age six as the most important time for development compared to any other time. It sets the stage for a child's success in school and into adulthood. Check out our website, [www.offtoagreatstart.org](http://www.offtoagreatstart.org) for current information, activities, and resources for the early years.

### **Breastfeeding Support**

If you are breastfeeding your baby and have questions, call the Intake Nurse at 519-258-2146 ext. 1350. If further assistance is needed, you can make an appointment to visit a Public Health Nurse at a breastfeeding clinic.

### **Reading, Rhythm & Movement: Alternatives to TV (Preventing Obesity in Preschoolers)**

A resource kit, "Reading, Rhythm & Movement: Alternatives to TV (Preventing Obesity in Preschoolers)" is available for loan at your local library or Ontario Early Years Centre. This kit includes a music CD and children's books that encourage movement, booklets on feeding infants and preschoolers, an Activity Planner, and a booklet on physical activities for children.

### **Starting Early: Keeping Your Preschooler at a Healthy Weight**

This booklet offers easy, helpful advice on active living and healthy eating for your one to five year old child. Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit 519-258-2146 ext. 1340 or 1-800-265-5822 ext. 1340 to have the booklet mailed to your home.

### **Have Fun and Play Safe at the Playground**

Playgrounds are a great place for children to be active, make friends, and develop skills. Playgrounds can also be a place where children get hurt. Supervision is the key to preventing injuries at the playground for preschool and school age children. For tips on how to have fun and play safe at the playground, go to [www.wehealthunit.org/playground-safety](http://www.wehealthunit.org/playground-safety)

### **CINOT Program**

The Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) program provides urgent dental care for children up to the age of 18 who do not have dental coverage. For more information call 519-258-2146 ext. 1103 or go to [www.wehealthunit.org/dental-health](http://www.wehealthunit.org/dental-health)

### **Just for Moms and Babies**

This informal group provides health information and support for new moms and their infants up to six months of age. This group meets for six weeks and is facilitated by a Public Health Nurse.

### **Prenatal Classes**

These six classes are for pregnant moms and their coaches. The topics include: Steps to a Healthy Pregnancy, Changes in Pregnancy, Managing Labour and Delivery, The Postpartum Experience, Care of the Newborn, and Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition.

### **Food Handler Course**

We offer both in-class and online courses that will prepare you for the Food Handler Certification Exam. For more information call 519-258-2146 ext. 1474 or go to [www.wehealthunit.org/inspect](http://www.wehealthunit.org/inspect)

# Mindful Aging

As we age, our bodies and brains change. Memory loss, shorter attention spans, and problems with speech are common changes. Right now, the aging population in Canada is the highest it's ever been. The elderly population (65 years and older) accounts for 25% of Canada's overall population (Statistics Canada, 2010). In 2011, the first of the Baby Boomers turn 65, making this age group and their mental health more of a focus than ever before.

## Age-related changes

In the elderly, the brain has been found to shrink in size. For example, the caudate (responsible for learning and memory), the cerebellum (responsible for coordination, attention, and language), and the hippocampus (responsible for memory) have been found to shrink the most of all brain sections in the elderly (Raz et al., 2005). Certain life events can also speed up the process by putting extra stress on us.

## Life events of the elderly

As we get older, we are faced with many transitions such as retirement, a loss of independence (i.e., losing a drivers licence, moving into assisted-living facilities), and the loss of loved ones (i.e., close friends, a spouse). These transitions put stress on the brain.

The elderly brain is very sensitive to stress. For example, the hippocampus has been found to be at high risk for changes during stressful times. Declines in this area of the brain, from both normal aging and stress, can lead to memory problems. Memory loss is a common mental health issue of the elderly (Lupien et al., 2009).

## Engage your body and brain

Between the normal age-related changes of the brain and the stress put on it through life events, the elderly face many mental health issues.

**Don't forget to keep your brain active too.**

## Can anything be done?

Yes. Keeping your body and brain active can help slow the aging process of the brain.

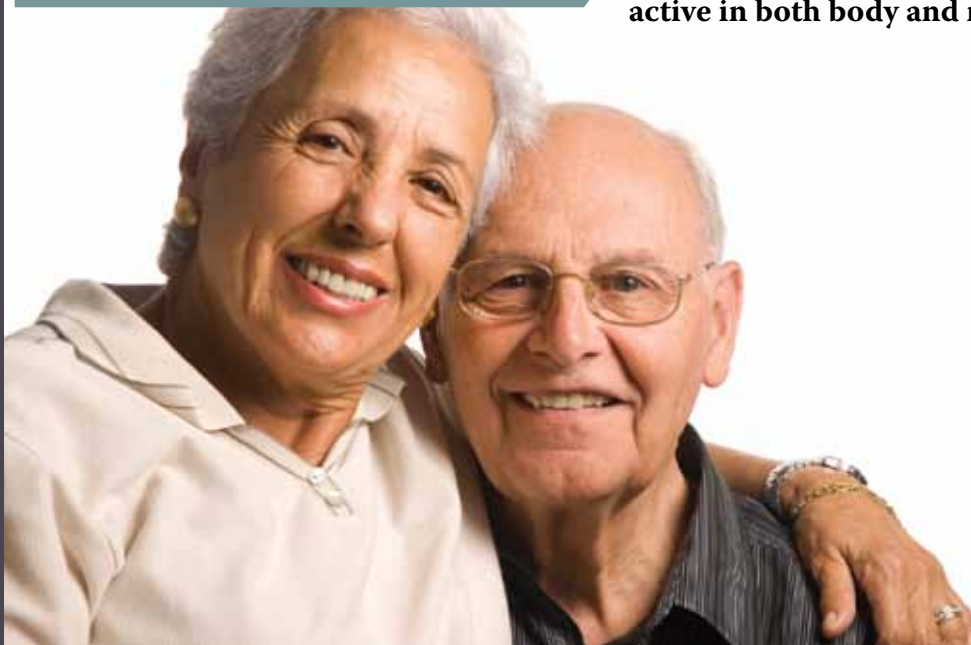
Being physically active, both throughout your life as well as during old age, has a positive impact on your mental health. Research showed blood flow to the cerebellum was higher in a group of physically active seniors than in a group of inactive seniors. Those who were active also showed higher performance in cognitive tests, especially "executive control processes" such as planning, scheduling, remembering, and multi-tasking (Kramer et al., 2006).

Don't forget to keep your brain active too. Reading, doing crossword puzzles, playing Scrabble, and other mentally challenging tasks can help stimulate blood flow and activity in the brain. This has been shown to reduce the risk of memory loss and help maintain balance and coordination (Verghese et al., 2006).

**Though age-related brain changes will happen, being active in both body and mind can help slow them down.**

### Key References:

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# THE POWER OF POO...

IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF COLON CANCER SCREENING

**September 29, 2010**  
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

A public event that provides the facts about colon cancer prevention and screening

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.  
Caboto Club  
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**FREE TO THE PUBLIC**

For more information please visit  
[cancer.ca/CancerTalkEssexCounty](http://cancer.ca/CancerTalkEssexCounty)

## Key note Speakers

Adam van Koeverden  
Canadian Olympic Medalist

Joe van Koeverden  
Colorectal Cancer Survivor  
(Adam's Father)

Dr. John Day  
Erie St. Clair Primary Care Lead

The Ontario Breast Screening program is celebrating 20 years of breast screening this year.

## Breast Screening Challenge Day this October.

Are you a woman over 50 who knows a mammogram is important, but has not had one yet or is overdue for one? Here is an opportunity for you!



To book a Challenge Day appointment call 519-253-0903 (Essex County), 519-437-6089 (Kent County), 519-464-4515 (Lambton County). Gifts and Prizes are planned.

## It's about Food Safety



### Look for it!

Look for the Food Safety Star Sign wherever you buy food.

### Ask for it!

Ask to see the sign if you don't see it. It's your right to know how well a food premises follows the food safety regulations.

### Search for it!

Search for a premises' health inspection results at the following website...



[www.safefoodcounts.ca](http://www.safefoodcounts.ca)

Small changes,  
big differences.



## Triple P Positive Parenting Program

Proven to work. Simple to use.

For a complete listing of sessions, visit the website [www.triplepwindsor-essex.ca](http://www.triplepwindsor-essex.ca).



# Mental Health WEBSITES

Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health  
[www.ccsmh.ca](http://www.ccsmh.ca)

Canadian Mental Health Association  
[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
[www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)

Centre of Knowledge on Healthy Child Development  
[www.knowledge.offordcentre.com](http://www.knowledge.offordcentre.com)

Check Up from the Neck Up, Mood Disorders Association of Ontario  
[www.checkupfromtheneckup.ca](http://www.checkupfromtheneckup.ca)

Helpguide  
[www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)

Mental Health First Aid  
[www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca)

Mental Health Promotion Unit (MHPU), Public Health Agency of Canada  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mhp-psm](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mhp-psm)

Mental Health Works  
[www.mentalhealthworks.ca](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca)

Mood Disorders Society of Canada  
[www.mooddorderscanada.ca](http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca)

Moods Magazine  
[www.moodsmag.com](http://www.moodsmag.com)

National Eating Disorder Information Centre  
[www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)

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 2010

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**HEALTHY  
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AWARDS**

Wednesday  
October 27th, 2010  
CIOCIARO CLUB  
Time: 7:30 a.m.  
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Oldcastle, Ontario

Register online at  
[www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) or  
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